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Foreign Minister Baron Tanaka's speech at the
54th Session of the Imperial Diet.

January 21, 1928

As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I have the honor to speak a few words on our diplomatic relations with foreign countries.

It is gratifying to note that the relations between Japan and various treaty Powers are growing in cordiality and the work of the League of Nations, in which this country, as a member State, is heartily co-operating, is making remarkable progress year after year.

The Conference of Japan, Great Britain and the United States for the limitation of naval armaments convened at Geneva in June of last year at the instance of Mr. Coolidge, President of the United States, unfortunately failed to achieve the end it had in view despite the zealous efforts of the Powers concerned. In participating in the Conference, the Japanese Government made it their basic principle to contribute to the security of world peace and the lightening of the burdens on the peoples, without losing sight of the safety of our national defence. Our delegates consistently followed this principle and endeavoured to assert our claims on the one hand and to harmonize the views of the British and American delegates on the other. I believe that Japan's fair and just stand toward the question of armament limitation and her sincere efforts for the promotion of universal peace at that memorable international gathering were fully recognized by the world at large.

The work of the conclusion and revision of our treaties on commerce and navigation with different countries is now in progress, and I deem it a cause of satisfaction to Japan and the countries concerned that a new commercial treaty was signed by the German Ambassador in this country and myself in July last and a Franco-Japanese agreement concerning residence and navigation in French Indo-China in August last.

As to the relations between Japan and the United States it is to be regretted that the question of discriminatory legislation against Japanese immigration pending for the past several years still remains unsolved. I should state, however, that the mutual understanding and sympathy of the American and Japanese peoples which are essential to the solution of such questions are gradually increasing.

Our intercourse with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, one of our good neighbours, is growing in amity and the divers economic undertakings carried on by our nationals in Russian territory in the Far East also indicate fair progress. Further, the trade between the two countries is marked by gradual development.

I shall now turn to China and express my views on the affairs of that country, in which Japan is most vitally interested. It is most deplorable that the disturbances in China still continue with no prospect of their cessation and her political situation is devoid of stability, thereby adversely affecting in various ways the Powers that are intimately related to that country. Even merely from an economic point of view, this is a matter of serious consequence particularly to Japan which is most closely related to China and, should some people, availing themselves of the chaotic state of affairs there, endanger the lives and property of foreign residents and sap the foundation of our economic interests which our people have built up in that country by painstaking efforts for many years, we shall on no account tolerate such a situation. Such being the position we take toward China, it is simply inevitable that, in the event of the Chinese authorities disregarding their treaty obligations and giving no efficient protection to the lives and property of foreigners, we should take self-defensive steps if necessary. It is needless to state that the Japanese Government do not intend to interfere with the domestic affairs of China, but we shall not hesitate at any moment to take a proper measure to insure our rights and interests and to safeguard the lives and property of our nationals in China. The fact that Japan was obliged to despatch troops temporarily for the purpose of protecting her nationals in the district of Tsinan, when the hostilities were about to spread towards Shantung in May last, is attributable to this policy. It was a matter of gratification that as a result the safety of our compatriots residing in that region was assured.

In connection with the developments in Chinese affairs of late, we find a marked tendency in different parts of the country reportedly to violate treaties in disregard of the protests of the Powers. Action of this character ought to be avoided for the sake of the wholesome progress of the Chinese people themselves and Japan cannot overlook it. Accordingly, the Japanese Government have already taken appropriate measures commensurate with actual conditions.

The foregoing is an outline of the policy of the Government toward China generally. With reference to Manchuria and Mongolia, especially the Three Eastern Provinces, we are inclined to think that, in view of their peculiar historical and geographical relations to this country, it may be necessary for us to take these provinces into special consideration. The Japanese Government hope that these particular provinces will always be kept in good order as a land for safe and peaceful habitation for the Chinese and foreigners alike and will attain proper economic development. Anxious by this desire, the maintenance of peace and order there is the object of constant attention. In this connection, the Japanese Government particularly wish it to be understood that, as in the other parts of China, they always intend sincerely to respect and observe the principle of the open door and equal opportunity in these provinces and, in pursuance of this principle, are prepared to cooperate with the Chinese authorities and people for the economic development of the region.

No small number of our residents in the Yangtse Valley were affected by the disturbances in the spring of last year and returned home out of the sphere of danger. As, however, later on, things gradually quieted down, the Government considered it necessary to cause them to resume their residence in the district and endeavour to re-establish their economic fortunes and took suitable measures therefor in the shape of the granting of a relief fund and accommodation of capital. It is a matter of congratulation for our country that these steps have contributed in no small degree to the restoration of their economic position.

Foreign Minister Baron Tanaka's speech at the
56th Session of the Imperial Diet.

January 22, 1929

Gentlemen,

With your permission I shall now dwell upon questions, of which as Minister of Foreign Affairs I have direct charge.

It must be gratifying to you as it is to me to observe that the friendship between this Empire and the Treaty Powers is growing steadily in cordiality and that this Empire is making full measure of contribution to the peace of the world, the foundations of which are being strengthened year by year.

As an instrument of world peace the importance of the treaty that was signed in Paris on August 27 last can hardly be overestimated. Considering the important character of the matter, the Government deemed fit to despatch a plenipotentiary to Paris for signing the treaty and appointed Count Uchida for that purpose.

In the matter of our friendly intercourse with individual nations, the Government have, since I last had the honour to speak before this House, concluded a commercial treaty and a commercial agreement respectively with Germany, New Zealand and Latvia, and the Fishery Convention with Russia was also ratified last year.

It is a source for congratulation that the bond of friendship, economic and political, with the United States is being more than ever strengthened. Only I wish to add that the matter of the immigration law, which has been pending for the past few years, has not yet been composed. A satisfactory solution of a problem like this must after all depend upon the mutual good understanding, which I am fully confident is growing year after year.

Turning now to the situation in China, it is highly gratifying for this Empire which always has at heart the welfare of the Chinese people to note that the strife and warfare which have been prevalent in China for near than fifteen long years are gradually subsiding and everything now appears to point to peace. This Government are sincerely desirous that the Chinese nation, availing itself of this happy tendency in its affairs, may speedily be enabled to accomplish its great enterprise of peaceful unification. Deeply sympathizing as they do with the Chinese people, this Government are quite willing, in cooperation with the other nations having close relations with China, to lend them assistance as far as possible in their task of construction. It need hardly be pointed out that, the path of China both at home and abroad being beset with difficulties, the Chinese Government, in order to attain their aims, should more than ever be guided by the counsel of self-restraint and moderation.

In speaking of our relationship with China, I feel bound to say a few words about our position in Manchuria as distinguished from the rest of China. In view of the political and strategic importance which it bears to Japan on account of its geographic contiguity with our territory and considering the historic significance which it possesses in that the region was restored to China by Japan at the risk of her national existence from the aggressive grip of Tsarist Russia, it is quite natural that the sentiment of the Japanese people toward Manchuria should be peculiarly keen and entirely different from that toward any other part of China. Furthermore, more than a million Japanese subjects reside in the region today and Japan has many important rights and interests there. The interest and concern with which the Japanese people have come to regard the affairs of Manchuria should therefore not cause the least wonder. The Japanese Government, while they will respect the sovereignty of China over Manchuria and do all in their power for the preservation of the principles of the open door and equal opportunity, are fully determined to see that no state of affairs arise in Manchuria which shall disturb the local tranquillity and thus put their vital interests in jeopardy. This Government have always followed this policy in all their dealings with Manchuria.

In a word, what this Government desire in regard to China is that the two nations, mutually understanding the position of the other, should be animated by the spirit of conciliation in their exchange of views and in their efforts for the settlement of the various questions pending between them, so that a relationship may be restored between them that will really not only contribute to their mutual well-being but will be conducive to the tranquillity of the Far East and eventually to the progress of the world civilization.

I believe that I have sufficiently made clear the foreign policies of this Government, in pursuance of which they expect to strengthen our friendly relations with other Powers, to protect and augment our rights and interests abroad, and to contribute to the consolidation of peace among men.